

Safe eating guidelines for pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and children under 12 years old

Do not eat Freshwater fish caught in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds in Massachusetts

Safe to eat Fish that are stocked in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds in Massachusetts

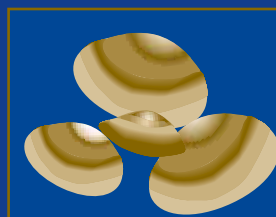
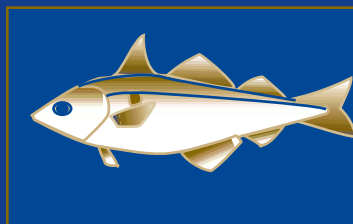
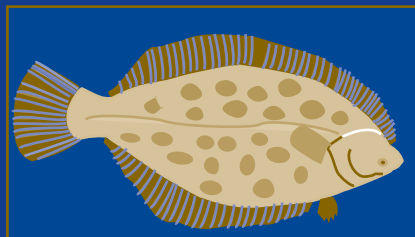
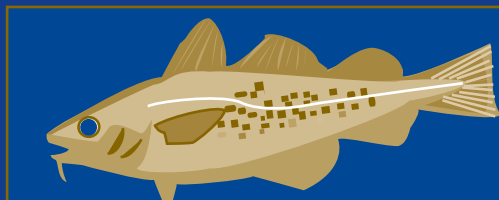
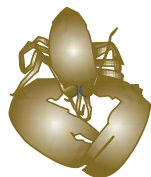
Safe to eat Cod, haddock, flounder and pollock in larger amounts

Do not eat Lobster from New Bedford Harbor

Do not eat Swordfish, shark, king mackerel, tilefish, and tuna steak

Do not eat Bluefish caught off the Massachusetts coast

Do not eat Lobsters, flounder soft-shell clams and bivalves from Boston Harbor



For more information on how to choose fish that are safe to eat contact:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Center for Environmental Health – Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment
250 Washington Street, 7th fl
Boston, MA 02108
or call us at: 617-624-5757
or you can visit our website at:
www.state.ma.us/dph/beha

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A Guide to
Eating Fish Safely
in Massachusetts



The Massachusetts Department of Public Health alerts pregnant women to the possible dangers of eating fish caught in Massachusetts streams, rivers, lakes, ponds and some coastal waters.

Safe eating guidelines for everyone

Do not eat Fish and shellfish from the closed areas of New Bedford Harbor

Do not eat Lobster tomalley

We advise that pregnant women, nursing mothers and women who may become pregnant do not eat any fish from these freshwater bodies or certain fish and shellfish caught in some Massachusetts coastal waters. Children under 12 years old are also at risk and should not eat these fish.

A varied diet, including safe fish, will lead to good nutrition and better health.

***Remember fish is good for you!
Choose fish that are safe to eat!***

What is unsafe about the fish and shellfish listed in this advisory?

These fish and shellfish may contain chemicals that can harm you and your baby's health. This advisory does not apply to fish stocked in lakes and ponds.

What chemicals are they?

Mercury and PCBs are the primary contaminants of concern. Mercury is a naturally occurring metal found in the environment.

However, mercury is also released by burning trash or burning coal for fuel. Once released into the air it can travel long distances and be deposited on soil and in water bodies. PCBs are man-made chemicals that were banned in the 1970s.



However, due to their widespread use, PCBs can still be found in our environment and get into our food.

How do chemicals and metals get into the fish?

Chemicals and metals get into the fish from pollution in the water and sediments where they live. Larger species feed on smaller species and the process of bioaccumulation begins. Bioaccumulation means that the chemicals or metals concentrate in the fish. The larger, older fish concentrate the most chemicals.

How do these chemicals affect health?

Developing fetuses, nursing babies, and young children are affected by mercury. Small amounts can damage a brain even before birth. High levels of mercury can affect how well children learn, think, behave, and develop later in life. Children who have been exposed to mercury in the womb can experience symptoms even if their mothers do not. PCBs can also affect developing fetuses, nursing babies, and young children.

Is There a Way of Cleaning or Cooking the Fish to Get Rid of the Chemicals?

Remove the skin, any fatty material and dark meat from the fish before cooking.

Broil the fish instead of frying it to allow as much fat as possible to be drained away. However, if the fish contains mercury, there is no way to clean or remove the chemical. It can't be cut, cleaned or cooked out.

Can these chemicals affect adults and older children?

Yes. At higher levels, adults and older children can experience health effects from these chemicals. Some of these chemicals can affect memory or behavior. They can make your skin tingle or feel numb. Some are also suspected of causing liver problems and some types of cancer.

Should My Family and I Stop Eating Fish Altogether?

No. Absolutely not. Fish is good for you and your family. It is a good source of protein and low in fat. It may also protect you against heart disease. If you may become pregnant or are pregnant or nursing, you and your children under 12 years old may safely eat 12 ounces (about 2 meals) per week of fish or shellfish not covered in this advisory. Otherwise, it is important to follow the Safe Eating Guidelines included in this advisory.

Can I eat canned tuna?

"Light" tuna as opposed to "Chunk White" tuna (also called albacore) has been shown to contain lesser amounts of mercury. Consumers should eat no more than 12 ounces per week. Very small children, including toddlers, should eat less.